

Women and Substance Use Disorders

Social and Health Disparities

Sarah Harkless
Substance Abuse Services Division
Alabama Department of Mental Health
May 13, 2010

What's in a Name?

- Substance Abuse
- Chemical Dependency
- Habituation
- Hooked
- Strung Out
- Drug Abuse
- Prescription Drug Abuse
- Alcohol Abuse
- Alcoholism
- Addiction

Substance Related Disorders

Category of **Mental Disorders** that consists of :

- Substance Induced Disorders and
- Substance Use Disorders

Substance-Induced Disorders

- Anxiety Disorder
- Mood Disorder
- Intoxication
- Intoxication Delirium
- Persisting Amnesic Disorder
- Persisting Perception Disorder
- Psychotic Disorder
- Sexual Dysfunction
- Sleep Disorder
- Withdrawal
- Withdrawal Delirium

Substance Use Disorders

- Substance Abuse
- Substance Dependency

Substance Abuse

A. A maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by one (or more) of the following, occurring within a 12-month period:

- (1) Recurrent substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home (e.g., repeated absences or poor work performance related to substance use; substance-related absences, suspensions, or expulsions from school; neglect of children or household)
- (2) Recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous (e.g., driving an automobile or operating a machine when impaired by substance use)

Substance Abuse

- (3) Recurrent substance-related legal problems (e.g., arrests for substance-related disorderly conduct)
- (4) Continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance (e.g., arguments with spouse about consequences of intoxication, physical fights)

B. The symptoms have never met the criteria for Substance Dependence for this class of substance.

Substance Dependence

A maladaptive pattern of substance use, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by three (or more) of the following, occurring at any time in the same 12-month period:

- (1) Tolerance, as defined by either of the following:
 - (a) A need for markedly increased amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication or desired effect
 - (b) Markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of the substance

Substance Dependence

- (2) Withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following:
 - (a) The characteristic withdrawal syndrome for the substance
 - (b) The same (or a closely related) substance is taken to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms

Substance Dependence

- (3) The substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended
- (4) There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
- (5) A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance, use the substance, or recover from its effects

Substance Dependence

- (6) Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use
- (7) The substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance

American Psychiatric Association: DSM IV-TR

Patterns: Women’s Drug Use

- The gender gap is narrowing for substance use across ethnicities, particularly among young women.
- Women are more likely to be introduced to and initiate substance use through significant relationships, while marital status appears to play a protective role.
- Women accelerate to injecting drugs at a faster rate than men, and rituals and high-risk behaviors surrounding drug injection are directly influenced by significant relationships.

Patterns: Women's Drug Use

- Women's earlier patterns of use (including age of initiation, amount, and frequency) are positively associated with higher risks for dependency.
- Women are more likely to temporarily alter their pattern of use in response to caregiver responsibilities.
- Women progress faster from initiation of use to the development of substance-related adverse consequences.

SAMHSA: TIP 51

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 6.2 percent of females ages 12 and older were classified with substance dependence or abuse in 2004, but only 0.9 percent of females received treatment in 2004

SAMHSA: 2005

Substance Use Disorders in Alabama: 2008

- Alcohol or illicit drug dependence or abuse: 7.84%
- Need treatment but not receiving it : 6.10%
- Admissions to public treatment programs: 20,966
 - Male: 69.5%
 - Female: 30.5%
 - Pregnant: 1%

Gender Matters

Women

- Face barriers to treatment entry
- Encounter obstacles to remaining in treatment
- Have specific treatment needs that are different from those of males

"...women represent important social and moral symbols that are the bedrock of society. And when angels fall, they fall disturbingly far."

(Hirsh, 1961)

Women and Substance Use

- Nice ladies don't drink
- Nothing worse than a drunk woman
- She should be ashamed of herself
- She can't care anything about her children
- How could she let herself get in this condition
- She's nothing but a geek monster
- Women who use drugs should be sterilized
- She's nothing but a crack head

The New York Times

In Alabama, a Crackdown on Pregnant Drug Users

By Adam Nossiter
Published: March 15, 2008

TIMES DAILY
Decatur, Alabama

Search on for Mother Who Left Rehab, Took Infant

By: Tom Smith, Senior Staff Writer
Published: Thursday, April 22, 2010

FRANKLIN COUNTY TIMES
Russellville, Alabama

Escaped Rehab Patient, Child Found in Texas

By: Nathan Strickland
Published: May 5, 2010

Substance Abuse Treatment

- Traditional treatment designed by and for males
- Limited access for women
- Societal roles and expectations

Women's Issues

Women's treatment must address...

- The physiological responses to substance use
- Medical problems and disorders
- Pregnancy
- Relationships
- Trauma

Women's Issues

- Socioeconomic issues
- Culture
- Co-occurring disorders
- Relevant recovery support
- Continuing Care

Helping Women with Substance Use Disorders

- Family
- Health professionals
- Treatment professionals
- Public officials
- General public

The Challenge

In the Navajo Nation, the woven basket is actually a series of concentric rings, one lying within the other, expanding outward and upward until the entire basket is shaped. By itself, one ring can hold nothing and bear no load. When bound together, the circles join, gain strength, and what before could hold nothing now holds stones for building nations and water for building bodies.

SAMHSA: TIP 51